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Dr *WILLIAMS*'s  
SEVENTH SERMON

AT

Mr. BOYLE'S Lecture,

1695.

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*The several Ways of Revelation.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preached at

*St. Martins in the Fields, Octob. 7. 1695.*

B E I N G   T H E

Seventh of the L E C T U R E

For the said Y E A R,

Founded by the Honourable

*ROBERT BOYLE, Esquire.*

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By *JOHN WILLIAMS, D. D.*  
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

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## H E B. I. 1, 2.

*God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, bath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, &c.*



IN these words we have (as I have before shewed)

1. A description of Revelation, 'tis God's *speaking*, or declaring his Will to Mankind.
2. The Certainty of that Revelation, 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at sundry times, &c. spake.*
3. The Order observed in that Revelation, as to Time, Manner, and Persons; *In time past by the Prophets, and in the last days by his Son.*
4. The Perfection and Completion of all, 'tis *in these last days by his Son.*

It's the Third that I am at this time to enter upon; viz. *c* *H*

The Order observed in that Revelation, &c.

Where, according to the Method laid down in the beginning of these Lectures,

1. I am to consider the several ways by which God did reveal himself *in time past by the Prophets*; as by Inspirations, Visions, &c.

2. I am to shew the difference between Divine Inspirations on one hand, and Diabolical Illusions, Natural Impressions, and Delusory Imaginations on the other.

3. I am to consider the several Periods of Divine Revelation, before the Law, under the Law, and under the Gospel; and the gradual Progress of it from first to last, from the lower to the higher degree, and the perpetual respect one had to the other.

4. I am to shew why God did thus gradually, and at *sundry times*, proceed in revealing his Will to Mankind, and not at first as fully and perfectly as *by his Son*.

1. I am to consider the several Ways by which God did reveal himself *in time past by the Prophets*.

When we are treating of Revelation, we are to consider that it is like Light, to be known

known by it self; and that the best way therefore is to take the Scripture it self for our Guide in the matters belonging thereunto; without which, how Learnedly soever men may discourse upon this Argument, 'tis to as little purpose as if we should go about to compile a History of the Invisible World, and of all the Transactions in it from time to time, which we have no Conversation nor Acquaintance with.

We see how Vain (though Ingenious) the Attempts of many Inquisitive Persons have been, notwithstanding the Improvements by Telescopes, &c. for their assistance, to give us any tolerable Account of the Solar and Lunary Worlds; and after much and indefatigable Pains, they are not able to say this is Land, and that Water; or whether neither of the two.

And we talk as much at random, when we leave the beaten Track of Scripture, and think to find out by our own Reason what we must understand by Revelation alone. We can only think and discourse of such Subjects, as we keep that Clue in our hand; and therefore laying aside all manner of Conjectures, and the Speculations of the *Jewish* or *Christian Rab-*  
*bies* upon the Argument in hand, I shall  
solely

solely keep my self to the Rule of Scripture.

All I pretend, is to compare Scripture with it self, and to try if by putting these things together, and laying them in order, I can contribute any thing to the Explication of so obscure and intricate an Argument.

There are several Terms made use of in Scripture with reference to this Subject, and for the signification of the way by which God did reveal and make himself known to Mankind; and they are, *Inspiration*, *Vision*, *Dreams*, and *Voices*.

1. *Inspiration*. So *Job* [ 32. 8. ] saith, *The inspiration of the Almighty gave them [ men ] understanding.*

And the Scripture is said to have been given by *Inspiration of God*, 1 *Tim.* 3. 16.

Now it seems to be called *Inspiration*, because it is insensibly communicated and breathed as it were into the Soul, as the Soul was into the Body; to which the Phrase in *Job* has a plain reference, where the same word נשמה is used, which is used *Gen.* 2. 7. when God is said to breathe into Adam the breath of life: And by which term it is properly and evidently distinguished from all the other Species of Divine Communications.

nications. For all the rest are sensible ways, whether by Representation, as Visions or Dreams; or by Action, as Voices; but this comes as Life came into the Body, or Air comes into the Lungs, without any such kind of Perception or Sensation.

Now there is a Threefold Inspiration;

(1.) That which is purely Natural: So 'tis said of God, *who hath put wisdom into the inward parts*, Job 38. 16. And he is said to *instruct the plowman to discretion*, Isa. 28. 26. This is no other than a Disposition infused, and connatural with the Soul it self; and that afterward in process of time ripens, and comes to be a Power or Principle, and even a Habit, by action and observation.

(2.) There is a Providential Inspiration; when God by some After-Act of his Providence, and for some special Service, doth either give Life to such a Natural Power and Inherent Disposition, or else infuses a new Disposition or Power into the Soul. This seems to have been the Case of Bezaleel, and Aboliab, and others, into whom God is said to have *put wisdom and understanding*, to know how to work all manner of Work; and yet of the same persons 'tis said, *whose heart stirred them up*, Exod. 31. 1, 2. That is, God did chuse them

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out,

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## 6      *The several Ways of Revelation.*

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out, as being of themselves well disposed and fitted for that Employment, and after an Extraordinary Manner, and by a Supernatural Assistance qualified them further for it. And from the Consideration of the difference between Men and Men, and indeed between a Man and himself, when from some imperceptible beginning he comes to advance beyond others, and even beyond himself in Knowledge, Wisdom, and Success, the World has been inclin'd to think there was somewhat of a peculiar Inspiration in it.

Cic. l. 2.  
de Nat.  
Deor.

Whence that Saying of the Heathen Orator, *Nemo Vir Magnus sine afflatu Divino unquam fuit*: No one ever came to be a Great Man, or attained to any extraordinary Eminence in Knowledge or Skill, but by a Divine Illumination.

(3.) There is an Inspiration purely Supernatural; that is immediately, wholly, and only from God. Of this sort is that Divine Influx commonly known by the term of *Regeneration*, when God so changes the Heart by the Powerful Operation of his Holy Spirit, that it's said to be New, *Ezek. 36. 26.*

But that which is more to our purpose, is when God in *Daniel's* Phrase, *chap. 2. 22. revealeth the deep and secret things*, and doth communicate his Will, so that the Person conceives, and thinks,  
and

and acts, as the Divine Power would have him conceive, think, and act.

It being here, as with the Soul in the Body, which is the Principle of all Vital Motion; for though the Body be in its contrivance admirably adapted for all Offices to which the Organs of it are to serve, if there were a Soul in it; yet it is the Soul that must make the Eye to see, and the Foot to move, and the Tongue to speak, or else there will be no Sight, Motion, nor Speech.

So it is here in Divine Inspiration of this sort, where the Spirit of God is to the Soul, what the Soul is to the Body, and must make all those Impressions upon it, must infuse the Power of conceiving and thinking, or rather those Conceptions and Thoughts, those Notions and Ideas of Things, nay, that Matter. So that the Person Inspired doth not think his own Thoughts, nor order his own Conceptions, nor form his own Notions, nor use his own Words (where these are Inspired) as far as he is Inspired. Not that his Reason is not in operation, (as it is in Raptures, Visions, and Dreams, where the Rational Powers are bound up as it were by Sleep for the present), but that these Infusions proceeding not from any Reasoning in themselves, but from an External and Supernatural



tural Cause, it is by that Cause determined to the Matter that is Inspired.

As a Prompter doth suggest the Matter, or dictate the Words to the Interpreter he makes use of; which are not to be esteemed the Words or Thoughts of the Interpreter, but of the Suggester. As our Saviour saith to his Disciples, *When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak: For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of the Father which speaketh in you.* Matth. 10. 19, 20.

Now as it was the Spirit of God speaking in them, that did in that case dictate and guide them in all they said, so that they spake with such Authority and Ability, such Wisdom and Elocution, without any Premeditation, as all their Adversaries were not able to gainsay or resist; *Luke 21. 15.*; (as we find in the Instance of St. Stephen, *Acts 6. 10.*)

So it was after the same manner that the Divine Spirit did breathe upon the mind (as our Saviour on the Apostles in an external way, the signification of the internal, *John 20. 22.*) in a way imperceptible; and did so insinuate it self, that it became; as it were, one Spirit with theirs, and they thought as the Spirit dispos'd them to think, as well



well as spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts

2. 4. This was thinking and speaking by Inspiration: And this being the most eminent way of God's communicating his Will to Mankind, is call'd Revelation in the New Testament especially, it being immediate, without the intervention of Visions, or Extracies, or Voices, or any other means than it self; and this was the way by which the Apostles received their Revelation, called a Revealing by the Spirit.

Rom.  
16. 25,  
26.  
Gal. 1.  
12.  
1 Cor 2.  
10.  
Ephes. 3.  
3, 5, 6.  
1 Thes.  
4. 8.

2. Another way by which God revealed himself, was Vision, or Sight. This was so common, that all the ways of Revelation are sometimes set forth by this term.

A Vision is the Representation of an Object, as in a Glass which places the Visage before us; and by which we have as clear a view of the things thus represented, as if they were the things themselves, and not the Images or appearances of them.

And therefore though the external senses are herein bound up, and, as it were, laid asleep in a Trance; yet the things presented at that time to the imagination, and intended as a Revelation of something to happen or to be done, are as plain, and evident, as sensible Objects that lie open to the sense. Thus Balaam describes it

as to himself, who saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open, Numb. 24. 16. that is, though he had not the exercise of his outward senses; and so his eyes were of no more use to him when open than if they were shut, yet he evidently saw whatever was presented to his mind. Thus St. Paul as clearly  
 Acts 22. 17, 18. saw our Saviour by a Representation or Vision,  
 Acts 9. when he was in a Trance in the Temple, as he  
 4. c. 26. did when he actually and visibly appear'd to him  
 13. at Mid-day on the way to *Damascus*.  
 1 Cor. 15. 8.

In this case things imaginary are as if they were real, remote as if they were near, future as if present, and secret as if open; that is, what sight, presence, and knowledge is to us in things sensible when we are awake, and have the full exercise of our outward senses; that is Vision to the Visionaries, to such as are in an Extasy.

This will be farther illustrated by a reflection upon these several particulars; to which (if I mistake not) all the instances of this kind may be reduced.

As

1. In Vision things imaginary and internal are represented as evidently as if they were real and external. Thus much  
 Acts 12. 9. is intimated in the case of St. Peter; of whom

whom 'tis said, when the Angel smote him, and the chains fell off from his hands; *he wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.* From whence it follows, that all this ( which he found to be real when he came to himself ) might have been represented by way of Vision ; and things thereby represented are as evidently proposed to the Mind, as outward Objects can be to the Eye. Thus it was with the same Apostle when he fell into a Trance, and *saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth ; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, &c.*

*Acts 10. 10, &c.* Of this kind of Vision, were *Jeremiah's* wearing a linnen Girdle, and his hiding <sup>13. 1. &c.</sup> it afterwards in a hole by *Euphrates* ; and his taking a cup of fury at the Lord's-hand, and causing all Nations to drink of it. Of the same kind were *Ezekiel's* eating of the Roll, his typical <sup>Ezek. ch. 5.</sup> laying Siege to *Jerusalem*, and an hundred things <sup>3. 4. 5. &c.</sup> more in that and other Prophetical Books.

In which cases, when the things represented are wholly imaginary, and never existent, what is in Phrase positively said of them, is to be supplied with *as it were* ; as in the aforesaid Vision of *St. Peter*, when it is said *Peter saw heaven opened,*

*ed, and a sheet descending, &c.* it being not a thing really done, but only by Representation, it is to be understood, That he, *as it were*, saw Heaven opened.

2. In Vision things remote are represented as present, and the Visionary has all the advantage of sight in things presented to the Eye without the use of sight, or change of place. So *Ezekiel*, when a Captive in *Chaldea*, had the state of *Jerusalem* (as it was then in fact) set before him; whicher he was brought *in the visions of God*, and as evidently saw all things that were at that time transacted in the Temple, as if he had been actually there: And even the secret practices of the Elders and Priests in the most retired corners were at that distance exactly represented to him; so that if he had been personally with them, they had not been more visible to him.

*Ezek. 1.  
1. & 8. 3.  
&c.*

There he beheld the Idols pourtrayed on the wall; and the Seventy Men, or *Sanbedrim*, and *Jaazaniah* their Head, in the midst of them, with every Man his Censer in his hand, and all the particulars as there described.

3. In Vision, things future are as evidently represented, as if they were present. Thus *Saul* when deprived of his Sight, saw in a Vision *Ananias* coming in, and by Imposition of hands restoring him

him to it; and by which means, as described to <sup>Acts 9.</sup> him before-hand, he as perfectly knew *Ananias*, <sup>12.</sup> when he came to see, as if he had afore time been conversant with him. From whence we may observe:

(1.) That Vision is Supernatural; so in the Old Testament, *Ezekiel* saith, *The hand of the Lord* <sup>Ezek. 8.</sup> *was upon me.* And in the New, *St. John* saith, <sup>Revel. 1.</sup> *He was in the Spirit.* <sup>10.</sup>

(2.) That it is Internal; when the Soul, tho' in the Body, yet for the present is as out of it, as to corporeal Sensations, and sees, perceives, and understands nothing by the external organs. Thus it was with *St. Paul* in his wonderful Rapture, when his Soul was in such an abstracted and elevated state, that he himself could not tell, whether he was *in the body or out of the* <sup>2 Cor.</sup> *body.* <sup>12, 1.</sup>

So that when the Name of Vision is given in Scripture to this way of Divine Communication, it is not from any use made of corporeal sight, or that it is entertain'd with any external objects; but because of the clearness and evidence of it, and a conformity it therein bears to outward and corporeal Sense.

By which it is distinguished from external Representations, (which were also very frequent

in those times of Revelation) of which there were two sorts more especially, viz.

(1.) That which the *Jews* call the *Shechinah*, which was God's manifestation of himself in a visible Glory and Majesty, without any form, as he did to the Patriarchs; and afterwards it was the token of his special residence among his people the *Jews*, called therefore his dwelling between the cherubins.

Gen. 17.  
1, &c.  
Psal. 80.  
1.

(2.) Another way of appearance was by Angels, when they took upon them a humane form, by way of condescension to mankind, and for a freer conversation with them; and from which form and umbrage, the Scripture terms them Men: but, besides what the Sequel of Scripture and common Sense shews, the Apostle hath taught us that they were Divine Messengers sent immediately from God, upon especial occasions and emergencies. But the *Shechinah*, called *The Glory of the Lord*, was a Manifestation of the Divine Presence, and not a Revelation; and the Angels were only Messengers of a Revelation: And so neither of them belong properly to this place.

Gen. 18.  
1.  
19. 1.  
Hebr. 13.  
2.  
Num. 16.  
42, &c.

3. Another way of Revelation was by Dreams. There is so far an agreement between Vision and Dreams, that in both the external Senses were

were bound up, so that a Vision may be called a supernatural Dream, and a Dream may be said to be a natural Vision ; and so in *Job* they seem to be taken for one and the same. *God speaketh* *Job* 33. *in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep* <sup>14 15.</sup> *falleth upon men, in slumbrings upon the bed.* <sup>4 13.</sup> But the Scripture otherwise usually speaks of them as two distinct ways of Revelation : So *Num.* 12. 6. *If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make my self known to him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.* So *Joel* 2. 28. And the difference between them seems to be,

(1.) That Vision properly speaking was generally, if not always, when the Visionary was awake, whether by night or day ; but Dreams ( as the nature of the thing shews ) were, when the external Senses were asleep ; and Reason, as to its present operation, was bound up with them.

(2.) In a Vision the whole was supernatural, without any humane predisposition or concurrence, as the Scripture-phrase doth shew, ( as *Revel.* *St. John* was said to be carried in the spirit into the wilderness, and a Trance is said to fall upon *St. Peter* : ) But to dream, is a natural Motion of the Spirits, and Disposition of Body, which the Spirit of God, or an Angel ( the usual Minister



employ'd in such conveyances) made use of; both as the Mind was then in a state of repose, and by the rest of the Body relaxed from the business of the day; and also as what was suggested in that way, made a stronger impression upon the Mind, when not diverted by outward objects and occasions, and that there was a cessation from all external and sensible operations. For it seemed necessary (naturally speaking) that in all Revelations there should be a sedate disposition of Mind, and an abstraction from all other Conceptions; and therefore it was either found so, as in Dreams, or made so by some Angelical and Divine Operation, as in a Vision or Trance. In both the Senses were therefore bound up; but in a Vision, by a supernatural Agency; in Sleep or Dreams, by the meer effect of Nature.

And if it be asked, How then is there a Revelation by Dream, when Revelation is supernatural, and a Dream natural?

I answer; Though it be as natural to dream as to sleep, and a Dream is a Consequent, if not a constant Concomitant of Sleep; yet in this case (which we are speaking of) the Revelation or Dream was supernatural. As to think or speak is natural to man; but so to think or  
speak



Speak as is above the capacity of the Agent, and what he of himself could never have thought or spoken, shews that he is not so much an Agent as a Recipient, and the Instrument made use of in the conveyance. Thus it was no more natural for *Balaam* several Ages before to foretel what the children of *Israel* should do to the *Moabites* Numb. in the latter days, than it was for his *Ass* to 24. 14. speak.

So to dream is natural, but to dream of such things then in doing, or of such things to come as are altogether independent on the Body, nor by any methods of Nature or presumptive Art to be known or foreseen, is supernatural. Thus to dream was natural to *Pharaoh*, as to others; and his Dream of the Seven fat and lean Kine, might have pass'd for the fruit of a nocturnal Imagination; but by a Dream to be made understand, that there should be successively Seven years of great Plenty, and then Seven years of Famine, could proceed only from a Divine Revelation. Gen. 41.

And this will further appear in the process of this Discourse, when I am to consider the difference between what is Natural, and what is Divine, &c.

4. Another sort of Revelation was by Voice, and that by way of immediate communication, or occasional. The former of these was vouchsafed to *Abraham*, and above all to *Moses*; to whom God is said to have spoke face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.

Exod.

33-9, 11.

By which He is distinguished from all other Prophets, and preferr'd above them, as it is recorded, *Numb. 12. 6, 7, 8.* *If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make my self known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, &c. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold.*

That Revelation to him was after the way of communication, open and clear, as a Friend converses with a Friend; and whenever he had occasion to know the mind of God, he went to the place where he might be sure to meet him, that is, into the Tabernacle, and there he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from between the two cherubims, *Numb. 7. 89.*

Next to this, was the continuance of that Oracle among the *Jews*, to which the High-Priest repair'd in any difficulties; but how far the Divinity did communicate it self in that way,

way, the Scripture is not positive. We find that it was with-held in the time of *Saul*; for when he enquired of the Lord, 'tis said, *The Lord answer'd him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urin, nor by prophets, nor by any other way.* 1 Sam. 28. 6.

There was another sort of Voice, which was altogether occasional, and proceeded from the magnificent Glory, in *St. Peter's* Phrase; and was for some particular direction, as to *Hagar*, to *Abraham*, &c. or for testimony and confirmation, as was that the Apostle speaks of, when it was audibly proclaim'd from Heaven, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.* 2 Pet. 1. 17.

Thus far I have treated of the several ways of Revelation recorded in the Holy Scripture, and in which God spake in time past by the prophets. There was one more which the *Jews* of latter Ages speak of, and would have continued, after the other were discontinued, called by them the *Bath Col*, or the *Low Voice*; and which after a sort they conceive was to supply the deficiency of the other; but that is beside my present purpose, having confined my self to Scripture alone.

Where also we find nothing observ'd or allow'd of another way, which the *Heathenish World* abounded in, and by which they thought the success and event of any design they had in hand might

might be learned, and that was Divination. When by the Air or Earth, the flight or feeding of Birds, the Entrails of Beasts, &c. they might judge of the way they were to take, or the event of their proceedings, as did the King of *Babylon*.  
*Ezek. 21.* A Pretence foolish enough, and which we can make no better a use of, than to observe how desirous the World has always been of a Revelation, how sensible of the need of a further direction, than what mere Nature or Reason did dictate; and withal, how foolish Mankind was under the want of it. For how can it be suppos'd that Futurities should be dependent upon such sorry Accidents, or that the Divinity should thus reveal it self? Therefore it is no wonder to find the true Revelation so silent as to these ludicrous matters; and if we had there found such an Order of Men established by that, as were the *Augurs*, *Haruspices*, and *Extispices* among the Heathens, and such Rules as those had for to guide them in their observations in that senseless Art; it would be a better Argument against the Authority of such a Revelation, than ever yet has been or can be advanced against it by its greatest Enemies. No! these are justly reckon'd among the Abominations of the Heathen, and forbidden to the *Jews*, viz. *There shall not*

not be found among you any one, &c. that useth divi<sup>Deut. 18-</sup>  
nation, or an observer of times, or an inchanter, or a<sup>10, &c.</sup>  
charmer, or a consulter with a familiar spirit ; for all  
that do these things, are an abomination unto the  
Lord.

But now granting that the Deity did make known and communicate his Will in the ways before spoken of, of Inspiration, Vision, Dreams and Voices ; yet there remains a great difficulty behind, and that is, How we may be satisfied about the truth and certainty of such a Revelation ? And that because as there are Supernatural Visions, Voices and Dreams, so there are Natural ; as Divine, so Humane ; as Real, so Imaginary on one hand, and Pretence on the other : And therefore how shall we distinguish the Supernatural, from the Natural ; the Divine, from the Humane ; the Real, from the Imaginary and Pretended ? And how know we, but that what we call a Divine Inspiration, Vision, Dream and Voice, may be Natural and Humane, may be Imaginary, Enthusiastical and Supposititious ? That persons may say as those, *Jer. 27. 23. I have dreamed, I have dreamed ;* and yet it be a *Vision of their own heart.* Or that there may be a *lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets*, as *Micaiah* said of those in his time, *1 Kings 22. 22.*

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This brings to the second :

2. To consider the difference between Divine Communications, Natural Impressions, and Diabolical Illusions; whether by Inspiration or Vision, Dreams or Voices.

In the resolution of which Case, it is not my design to discourse nicely, after a philosophical manner; as about the force of Imagination, and the influence invisible Agents have upon Mankind; for that is to go a great way about, without coming nearer the Point than when we first set out; and is not to be done, without knowing what we pretend not to know.

I don't question but that if we had an immediate Intuition into the state of the Mind, or the operations upon it, we might discern as plain a difference between Temper and Inspiration, Imposture and Revelation, as between day and night; or as there is between an Angel of light, and an Angel of darkness, to such as are in the invisible state.

But these things are alike unknown to us; only this we may say, That Divine Inspiration is discover'd as Light, by it self; and which the person divinely moved and illuminated is as much assured of, as he is of the existence of any thing

thing in being, or the truth of any Proposition, as has been before said. And when the Divine <sup>Serm. 3.</sup> Power operates, it hath so much the Ascendant <sup>P. 7.</sup> over the natural temper, that it lays a person under an uncontrollable necessity of obeying <sup>Jer. 20.</sup> the Dictates of it, as it was with the Prophets of <sup>Ezek. 3.</sup> old. <sup>14.</sup>

But if it be said, Don't we see Enthusiastical Persons as confident of their Imaginary Inspirations and Visions, and look upon themselves as much obliged to follow them, as those that are truly Inspired do to obey what is Divine?

I answer, Be it so; yet this is of it self no Argument against the truth and certainty of Revelation, and of Revelation in those ways. Is it any Argument against the certainty of Sense, that it is often deceived and imposed upon? Or against Truth, that there are Errors and everlasting Disputes among Mankind? And because there are, are we all obliged to be Scepticks; and may we be positive that there is no Truth nor Certainty in the World; and that no man can be sure he sees, or hears, or knows, or lives? And because there are or have been deluded and brain-sick persons; are therefore none wise, or in their Wits?



And are all Inspired Persons no more to be credited than if they were Lunaticks ? Or don't they know themselves to be any more Inspired, than those that are agitated by the power of a wild Imagination ? Confidence in Imaginary Inspirations may be great ; but the Perception, and so the Assurance cannot be alike to what is real. But tho' the Deity can so communicate it self, as that the Person inspired shall know most certainly, it is from God, and from him alone ; and so there is no absolute necessity of any farther evidence to him, no more than there is of Light to give evidence to Light : yet that there might nothing be wanting for the further satisfaction of such as had a Revelation, there was often added some sign, or supernatural proof. So when *Gideon* had some doubt of what the Angel said, ( when he knew not what he was ) and was timorous, when requir'd to go on a difficult Enterprize ; he was confirmed, by the Fire

Judg. 6. out of the Rock that consumed the Flesh ; and  
 21, 37. by the Fleece ; and the Soldier's Dream, and the  
 7. 13, 14. Interpretation of it.

And *Moses* was convinced not only of his own Mission from God, but of the acceptance and authority he should upon it have with the People, when the Rod in his hand was turned  
 into



into a Serpent; and his Hand, by putting it into his bosom, was made leprous; and cured again in a moment, by taking it out. Exod. 4.  
3, 6.

A course altogether necessary, for the satisfaction of others, (as has been before observed) and which may reasonably be demanded. For if a Person shall come, under the pretence of a Revelation, with a Message to others, and require them, as they tender their Salvation, to receive it, and to submit to it, without such Certificates as shall give Authority to it; it is like one that shall take on him the Style and Character of an Ambassador, without any Credentials to give him Authority, and deserves no better acceptance. Let then a *Moses* come with a Message to *Pharaoh* in the Name of God, and require him to obey it; that Prince might reasonably expect a farther confirmation than his word, and it must be somewhat truly great and greater than what was done by his Magicians, that should determine him to a belief of it. Serm. 3.  
P. 13.  
Exod. 8.  
18.

Let *Elijah* confront *Ahab*, and the Priests of *Baal*, and they dispute his Mission and Authority; he appeals to the Supreme Authority to decide it, 1 Kings  
19. 24,  
36.  
*The God that answereth by fire, let him be God.*

Let a lying spirit be put in the mouth of the other Prophets in opposition unto *Micaiah*, the  
Pro.

Prophet, for the Conviction of all, leaves it to the event, saying unto *Ahab*, *If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me. And he*  
 1 Kings 22. 28, *said, Hearken, O people, every one of you.*

29.

By this means, that is, by Predictions and Miracles, a Prophet may be known to be a Prophet, and an Inspiration to be an Inspiration; and by these Characters may we be able to judge of both; as to the Authority of the Mission, and the Truth of the Inspiration. Where the Evidence was necessary, there was never wanting one or both of these. And though *John* did no Miracle, yet he had the Spirit of Prophecy,

Joh. 10.

ver 41.

the People acknowledged, for said they, *All things John spake of this man [Jesus] were true.* There may, 'tis likely, be Inspiration where there is neither of these, nor the like Evidences; but there is no obligation on others to believe it, without the Evidence be sufficient; (for such as the Evidence is, such is the Obligation) but the Evidence is not sufficient which rests solely on Humane Authority, and has nothing but the bare word and affirmation of the Pretender, to prove it. To this purpose, saith our Saviour, *If I bear witness of my self, my witness is not true----- The works that I do, bear witness of me.* So that Inspiration is, as to others, no Inspiration, till it be proved:

Joh. 5.

31, 36.

It

It may, for ought appears to the contrary, be no other than Delusion, or Imposture. Let therefore the Imagination be never so strong, the Confidence never so great, the Intent never so good; the Question is, Whence is this, what Evidence doth the Person bring of his Mission from God? upon what doth it rest? into what is it resolved? What doth he produce more than what may be the fruit of Imagination? It may all be a fit of Enthusiasm. So that if a Person will pretend to immediate Inspiration, (were it an Age for it) and much more, pretend to it after Inspiration has ceased; he must be able to fortify it by such Evidence as can come from none but him from whom the Inspiration came, if it be Divine.

So much for Inspiration, in opposition to Natural Impressions and Diabolical Illusions; and which may serve as a general Answer to the other particular Instances that remain.

Thus it was in Visions; which as to the Visionaries was with that Evidence, as could leave no manner of doubt of what was therein represented. So Micaiah describes his Vision, *I saw* <sup>1 Kings 22. 19.</sup> *the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand, and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? &c.* And by this  
as

as he himself did abide, so the Event verified it,  
*vers. 34.*

The same is to be said as to Dreams, which had such a peculiar stroke upon the Imagination, that the *Divine* had a different effect upon the Person  
 Gen. 20. from what was *Natural*; and therefore *Abimelech*,  
 3. before he had expostulated the Case with *Abraham*, communicated his Dream to his Family, from the confidence he had in himself of the truth of it.

And especially has this a sufficient Evidence as to others.

1. When such things are therein discover'd, which they had before no knowledge of; as was the Case of *Abimelech*.

Or 2. Which were so remote in Place, or Time, as none could possibly reveal, but by a Divine Communication.

Or 3. When the Interpretation was quite different from the Dream, nor was without that Interpretation to be understood. This was the Case of *Pharaoh*, about the *seven fat and lean kine*, &c. *Gen. 41: 38.* Of *Nebuchadnezzar*, about his own Transformation and Deposition, *Dan. 4. 19.* and that of the *Midianitish Soldier*, *Judg. 7. 13, 14.*

Where if we grant that the Dreams, as to the matter, might have been the effect of a rolling

ling Imagination, ( as *Pharaoh's Kine*, *Nebuchadnezzar's Tree*, and the *Soldier's Cake* ) yet how the seven Kine should prove a Prediction of seven Years Plenty and Famine ; or the felling of the Tree be an Emblem of *Nebuchadnezzar's* dethronization ; or that a Cake of Bread tumbling into the Host, and overturning a Tent, should signify the Sword, and Success of *Gideon*, and that *into his hand God would deliver the host of Midian* ; was utterly unaccountable , if it were not as *Joseph* said to *Pharaoh*, that *God himself thereby shewed what he was about to do*, and that it came from him who is a *Revealer of Secrets*, as *Nebuchadnezzar* acknowledged.

Lastly, The like may be said of a Revelation by Voice, which, if internal, is the same with a Dream or Vision, as going along with it ; and so has the same sort of evidence. If external, it is its own evidence ; as was that from Heaven, to give testimony to our Saviour. Or it was by way of Oracle ; and then the Authority of the Voices was justified by the numerous Predictions ; the design they apparently promoted of encouraging the good, of admonishing and reforming the bad ; and in all, of promoting Vertue and true Religion in the world ; and to whose veracity future Ages have given Testimony, by suitable  
E Events.

Events. Whereas those of the Heathens were very suspicious and doubtful, and often detected to be only Forgery and a Conspiracy; and disowned at that time (when in vulgar estimation) by the wisest among themselves; and the reputation of which at last as well utterly fell, as the pretence to them did.

Vid. Ser.  
2. p. 36.

So that were the Case to be put upon this issue, and to be decided by the measures before laid down, we may safely venture the whole Cause of Revelation upon it; when there is nothing wanting, that can reasonably be desired, toward the justification of its veracity; and that there is no manner of pretence for applying the same terms of evidence and sincerity to Imagination, as to Inspiration; or to Imposture, (whether Enthusiastical or Diabolical) as is to Revelation.

For when was it known, that Imagination or Nature did ever empower persons to speak all Languages, and to discourse readily at once with the *Parthians*, *Medes*, and *Elamites*, &c. in their several Tongues? When did Imagination or Nature enable persons, without any skill, to cure Diseases, naturally incurable; and such as had no Humane Learning, to talk like Philosophers of the sublimest Arguments, and with as much freedom as they used the Speech of the Foreign Nations they instructed?

Fur.

Further, What Imagination, or Nature, or Art, could inspirit *Moses* with such a supernatural Power, as to turn his Rod into a Serpent, and to devour those of the Magicians; and by a stroke of it to fetch water out of the Rock, and stop the mighty Current of the Sea?

What Imagination could form such Ideas in the minds of a *Pharaoh* and *Nebuchadnezzar*, or inspire a *Joseph* and a *Daniel* to give such an Interpretation of them, as justified it self to be true by a correspondent Event?

When did Imagination give life to a Fly, or do the least Act out of it self? When did that, or Nature, or Imposture, raise the dead, with *Elisha*, call for Fire from Heaven with *Elijah*, or foretel what shall happen a hundred or a thousand years after, or so much as what a Person shall think to morrow? Here we may challenge all the Magicians of a *Pharaoh* and a *Nebuchadnezzar*, all the Men of Art and Science, all the Enthusiasts and Impostors in the World, to talk as the Persons Inspired did talk, to do as they did, and to produce those Testimonies as those upon occasion produced in their own justification, and for the confirmation of their Mission from God.

From all which we see what evidence we have



have for the Truth of our Revelation, by the various ways of its manifestation. If we had such Inspirations, such Visions of things future and remote, &c. what evidence could we desire more to attest and bear witness to what we are to believe and receive? And what Absurdities must we be cast upon, if we would venture to call those matters of Fact in question, which though peculiar to those times, lose not their evidence and force because they are not in ours, nor have been for several Ages, nor are to be in the Christian Church?

However, there are those manifestations of the Divine Presence and Power, which we are all capable of, and may obtain by Prayer to God; and which shall be more beneficial to us, than if we our selves could work Miracles, and were the Inspired Persons to whom God did thus make known himself, as he did *in time past to the Prophets*; and those are the Grace and Assistance of his Holy Spirit, and the doing his Will: Qualifications that will render us more acceptable to him, and make us more capable of his favour, and all the advantages of it in this world, and that to come, than if we could divide the Sea with *Moses*, or stop the Sun in its course with *Jesus*, or raise the dead with *Elisba*. For then, though without those miraculous Donations, we may be received with a *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant to us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

F I N I S.